

*\*Please note: All articles are available in the attached PDF.*

*\*To receive the Daily News Digest in your inbox, email [R6Press@epa.gov](mailto:R6Press@epa.gov).*

**1 – Deer Park chemical fire extinguished overnight, ITC says, Houston Chronicle, 3/20/19**

<https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Deer-Park-chemical-fire-extinguished-overnight-13702369.php>

The chemical tank fires that burned for nearly four days at the Intercontinental Terminals Co. plant in Deer Park were extinguished overnight, the company and firefighters say.

**2 - Residents near fire raging at Texas chemical plant raise health concerns, CBS News, 3/19/19**

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/deer-park-fire-officials-monitoring-air-quality-after-texas-chemical-plant-fire-2019-03-19/>

A chemical plant near Houston has been burning since Sunday morning. Officials said Tuesday they don't know how long it will take to burn itself out. Firefighters are trying to keep it from spreading — as thick black smoke billows into the air, hour after hour.

**3 - ITC to Reuters: Chemicals from Deer Park fire have spread into nearby ship channel, Houston Chronicle, 3/19/19**

<https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Texas-petrochemical-fire-spreads-to-more-storage-13700934.php>

The chemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company's Deer Park facility may create more problems to the environment. When a reporter asked if chemical runoff will go into the bay during a press conference late Tuesday afternoon, David Wascome, a senior vice president of operations for ITC, did not provide a definitive answer.

**4 - Arkansas farm-permits bill progresses; authority shift given Senate nod, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/20/19**

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/mar/20/farm-permits-bill-progresses-20190320/?news>

A bill that would transfer hog and other farm permitting authority from one state agency to another passed in the Arkansas Senate on Tuesday after a brief discussion over whether the bill says what its sponsor claims it says.

**5 - Santa Fe opposes EPA proposed rule change, Albuquerque Journal, 3/18/19**

<https://www.abqjournal.com/1293524/santa-fe-opposes-epa-proposed-rule-change.html>

The city of Santa Fe is voicing its opposition to a proposed rule change by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that would do away with protections of waterways against pollutants adopted in 2015, and it wants you to do the same.

**6 – As FEMA rewrites flood insurance rules, ‘the devil’s in the details’, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/19/19**

<https://www.nola.com/business/2019/03/as-fema-rewrites-flood-insurance-rules-the-devils-in-the-details.html>

New flood insurance rules that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is writing for the National Flood Insurance Program have garnered praise and alarm from Louisiana interests monitoring the changes. While more accurate mapping of flood risk is welcome, the price of coverage for some property owners might well rise.

**7 – Flooding in the Midwest unlikely to impact Mississippi River levels in New Orleans, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/19/19**

<https://www.nola.com/news/2019/03/flooding-in-the-midwest-unlikely-to-impact-mississippi-river-levels-in-new-orleans.html>

Mississippi River levels in New Orleans are not likely to be affected by the severe flooding that has impacted residents across four midwestern states, as rising water levels of the Missouri River breached or overtopped nearly 200 miles of levees this week.

**8 - FEMA changes for flood insurance program put burden on riskiest properties, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/18/19**

[https://www.nola.com/national\\_politics/2019/03/fema-changes-for-flood-insurance-program-put-burden-on-riskiest-properties.html](https://www.nola.com/national_politics/2019/03/fema-changes-for-flood-insurance-program-put-burden-on-riskiest-properties.html)

Climate advocates say an overhaul of the nation's flood insurance program being unveiled by the Trump administration will spur communities around the country to better plan for extreme weather, but could drive up costs for some homeowners.

**9 - Footnote sparks wrangling on endangerment finding, E&E News, 3/20/19**

<https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060127685>

A footnote is renewing debate on how EPA should consider its 2009 determination that greenhouse gases harm human health and welfare as it rewrites climate rules.

**10 – 1 in 3 Americans blame climate change for weird winter temperatures, Washington Post, 3/20/19**

<https://wapo.st/2Fgh0N3>

This winter, temperatures plunged so low in the Midwest — at times below minus-50 degrees — that mail service stalled, airline gas lines froze and Chicago set parts of its commuter rail on fire to stop the bone-deep chill from damaging the tracks.

**11 – Cyanide plant would be safer under Cornerstone proposal, hazards inspector says, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/20/19**

<https://www.nola.com/politics/2019/03/cyanide-plant-would-be-safer-under-cornerstone-proposal-hazards-inspector-says.html>

Jefferson Parish's top hazardous materials officer predicted Tuesday (March 19) that the Cornerstone Chemical Co. complex at Waggaman would "absolutely" be safer under the company's plans to upgrade equipment and technology while building a new \$100 million cyanide plant there.

**12 – State water agency to double aquifer pumping fees; cost will be less than \$2 a month per family, Baton Rouge Advocate, 3/19/19**

[https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/environment/article\\_18cd42f8-4a7c-11e9-a4f2-8333ce387082.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/environment/article_18cd42f8-4a7c-11e9-a4f2-8333ce387082.html)

The local groundwater board intends to double the fees for water pumped for residential and industrial use in an effort to secure more funding to protect the aquifer beneath Baton Rouge.

**13 – After Outage, Gold King Mine Wastewater Plant Back In Operation, CBS Denver, 3/19/19**

<https://denver.cbslocal.com/2019/03/18/gold-king-mine-wastewater-plant-snowstorm/>

A plant that treats wastewater draining from the Gold King Mine in southwestern Colorado has resumed operating after being shut down by a winter storm that struck the area this past week. The New Mexico Environment Department announced Saturday afternoon that it received word from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the facility was back up and running.

# Deer Park chemical fire extinguished overnight, ITC says

By [Julian Gill](#) Updated 8:16 am CDT, Wednesday, March 20, 2019



IMAGE 1 OF 74

People gather to watch as firefighters continue to battle the petrochemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company, which grew in size due to a lack of water pressure last night, Tuesday, March 19, 2019, in Deer Park, Texas.

The chemical tank fires that burned for nearly four days at the Intercontinental Terminals Co. plant in Deer Park were extinguished overnight, the company and firefighters say.

Crews continue to spray foam and water on the tanks to cool them and prevent reignition, the release said.

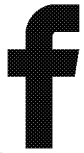
"Although all fires have been extinguished at this time, steam and smoke may still be visible from the area and the possibility for reigniting still exists," the release said.

No serious injuries have been reported since the fire started at about 10:30 a.m. Sunday. Air quality levels were still at moderate levels Wednesday morning, according to AirNow.gov.

This story will be updated.

# Residents near fire raging at Texas chemical plant raise health concerns

---



Share



Tweet



Reddit

Flipboard



Email

---

A chemical plant near Houston has been burning since Sunday morning. Officials said Tuesday they don't know how long it will take to burn itself out. Firefighters are trying to keep it from spreading — as thick black smoke billows into the air, hour after hour.

Andrew Wheeler, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), said his agency is closely monitoring the air quality. The chemical plant is closed and evacuated.

The chemical fire's flames are wider and the tower of smoke is thicker — darkening the Houston's sky as far as 40 miles away.

The plant owner, Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC), said while the fire looks ominous, no one is in danger. ITC spokesman David Wascome said they continue to monitor air quality.

"We're working with Sea-Tac, we're also working with the EPA," Wascome said. "They actually flew a few planes through the plume the last few days and they're still within safe levels."

Jorge Guerra, who lives three miles away, doesn't believe it.



Smoke rises from a fire burning at the Intercontinental Terminals Company in Deer Park, east of Houston, Texas, U.S., March 18, 2019. **JAIMIE MELDRUM/@JAMIEJOW/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS**

"I've seen ash fall out -- black pieces of ash," Guerra said. "I've seen it on my cars, I've seen it on the front porch on the sidewalk. Does that scare you? It does, it does. What scares me more is what we don't see."

ITC stores chemicals used in gasoline mixes and paint thinners. They can cause difficulty breathing, coughing, headaches and irritation to the eyes, nose and throat.

The company has a history of environmental violations, having paid more than \$200,000 in fines over the past decade. Experts say even if the air quality is good now, it might not be

tomorrow.

"If we get a thunderstorm or something like that, which mixes the atmosphere, then all that junk is going to come to the surface," said Robert Talbot, a professor of atmospheric chemistry at the University of Houston.

The fire is still spreading on Tuesday night. Eight of those massive chemical tanks are in flames right now, seven more are in the path of the fire. The company continues to say toxins are not in the plume of smoke that can be seen for miles.

# ITC to Reuters: Chemicals from Deer Park fire have spread into nearby ship channel

By [Peter Dawson](#), Chron.com / Houston Chronicle Published 3:55 pm CDT, Tuesday, March 19, 2019



---

## IMAGE 1 OF 74

People gather to watch as firefighters continue to battle the petrochemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company, which grew in size due to a lack of water pressure last night, Tuesday, March 19, 2019, in Deer Park, Texas.

---

The chemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company's Deer Park facility may create more problems to the environment.

"Some of the chemicals have washed into the adjacent Houston Ship Channel that links the Gulf of Mexico to Houston, the nation's busiest petrochemical port," ITC spokesperson Dale Samuelsen **told Reuters**.

That same report revealed that ships continue to move through the 50-mile-long channel.

**RELATED: Deer Park plant fire: How the weather impacts growing smoke plume**

## Recommended Video

When a reporter asked if chemical runoff will go into the bay during a press conference late Tuesday afternoon, David Wascome, a senior vice president of operations for ITC, did not provide a definitive answer.

00:02:40

e're discharging through a ditch, and we're y helping us assist with that. TCEQ is also doing

some analysis with the water samples. We're also checking, monitoring online PH, COD and other things.

Chron.com sent ITC multiple requests for comment.

Up to this point, they have gone unanswered.

ITC officials **said Tuesday that two additional chemical tanks caught fire overnight** at the plant on Independence Parkway after water pressure dropped when two fireboat pumps providing water to firefighters malfunctioned for about six hours.

The fire, which had been contained to six storage tanks late Monday, had spread to eight by 2:30 a.m., the company said. The plant has 242 tanks, according to the company's web site.

On Tuesday, officials from ITC, which is owned by Japan's Mitsui & Co, also said that it brought in a 15-person crew experienced in battling tank-farm fires. The organization will also bring other equipment to help solve the issues at the scene.

Fire officials are now uncertain about **how long the chemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Co. will continue** after the blaze at the Deer Park facility worsened late Monday night and early Tuesday morning.



## Arkansas farm-permits bill progresses; authority shift given Senate nod

by *Emily Walkenhorst* | Today at 4:30 a.m.

4

COMMENTS

f t +

0

Follow



C&H Hog Farms, seen from the air in May 2017, is home to thousands of hogs on Big Creek in the Buffalo River watershed. - Photo by Mitchell PE Masilun

A bill that would transfer hog and other farm permitting authority from one state agency to another passed in the Arkansas Senate on Tuesday after a brief discussion over whether the bill says what its sponsor claims it says.

Senate Bill 550 amends current law focused primarily on dry animal litter and poultry farms, gives the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission the responsibility to issue concentrated animal feeding operation permits, and gives decision-making power to local conservation districts on manure disposal permits. That authority is currently under the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.

### Arkansas Politics Updates

Stay up to date with the latest Arkansas political news.

Email Address

Sign Up

The bill also allows people applying for manure waste system permits to "waive" public notification requirements.

Concentrated animal feeding operations can include dairy and other farms of certain sizes. All hog farms must get permits if they operate liquid waste management operations, which nearly all hog farms do.

ADVERTISING

Currently, the department has more than 100 active hog farm permits, according to state data.

Agricultural groups have favored the bill, while environmental groups and water utilities have opposed it.

[RELATED: Complete Democrat-Gazette coverage of the Arkansas Legislature]

Sponsor Sen. Gary Stubblefield, R-Branch, said he introduced the bill to allow farmers who have dry poultry operations, in addition to liquid animal waste operations, to work with a single agency in the permitting process.

The bill passed Tuesday 25-5, with three people voting present and two not voting.

Sens. Will Bond, D-Little Rock; Joyce Elliott, D-Little Rock; Keith Ingram, D-West Memphis; Mark Johnson, R-Little Rock; and Greg Leding, D-Fayetteville, voted against the bill. Sens. Eddie Cheatham, D-Crossett; Linda Chesterfield, D-Little Rock; and Jason Rapert, R-Bigelow, voted present. Sens. Missy Irvin, R-Mountain View, and Dave Wallace, R-Leachville, did not vote.

The House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development is to consider the bill as a special order of business March 27.

Stubblefield spoke for several minutes about misconceptions that he said people were emailing to senators, but two of the things Stubblefield stated were refuted by two other senators.

Ingram took issue with Stubblefield's characterization that the Natural Resources Commission would issue the permits.

Stubblefield has presented the bill as transferring all hog farm permitting responsibility to the commission, Ingram said, "but that's not really true." A portion of the bill stipulates that waste management permits would be determined by local conservation districts, Ingram said. Each county has a conservation district.

The commission could only affirm or overturn a conservation district decision to deny an application or to deny a portion of the application, according to the bill's language, Ingram said.

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

### More related headlines

JOHN BRUMMETT: Listen to the experts, Gus

MIKE MASTERSON: End run in Ledge

Bill would transfer Arkansas hog farms' oversight

ADVERTISEMENT

Stubblefield stood by his presentation and said conservation districts approve nutrient management plans and refer their decisions to the commission, which would issue the permit.

"This bill transfers all permits to" the commission, he said.

"OK, but I don't think that's what this reads," Ingram said.

Proposed Ark. Code Ann. 15-20-1115 refers to "liquid livestock litter utilization" and concerns "livestock litter management plans." Such plans spell out the process for disposal of animal manure generated by the waste management system, such as how and how much animal manure farmers will be allowed to apply to land as fertilizer.

Under the proposed subsection (c), the "liquid livestock litter management plan is subject to approval by the board of directors of the conservation district where the majority of the land ... is located."

It continues, saying that an applicant can appeal a disapproval of a management plan or the disapproval of a provision in a management plan to the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission's executive director.

Subsection (d) goes on to state that an approved plan "constitutes a permit to apply nutrients consistent with the liquid livestock litter management plan."

Proposed Ark. Code Ann. 15-20-1116 concerns "liquid livestock waste system permits." In the bill's definitions, "liquid livestock litter management system" refers to the "collection, storage, distribution, or disposal of livestock litter in liquid form."

## **DOCUMENT**

### **Senate Bill 550**

[View](#)

That section of the bill says the commission is the agency that would act on permit applications.

Waste system permits that are active once the commission begins accepting permit applications would be transferred to the commission "without modification," the section reads.

The commission must adopt final rules by July 1, 2020, according to the bill, and the commission must begin accepting permit applications by Jan. 1, 2021.

Other than Stubblefield, three senators -- Blake Johnson, R-Coming, and Alan Clark, R-Lonsdale, and Ricky Hill, R-Cabot -- spoke in favor of the bill. Bond spoke against it.

Bond said the measure should be rejected in the spirit of Arkansas' nickname, the Natural State.

Senators in favor of the bill argued that farmers are good stewards of their land and that commission workers are good at what they do.

"Keeping the state the Natural State, I don't think, is up for debate," Clark said.

Bond spoke for several minutes and fielded a handful of questions from senators.

While Stubblefield told senators that the commission would have to write regulations that are just as stringent as the Environmental Quality Department's, Bond contended that the bill doesn't state that.

Critics of the bill have expressed concern that it would get rid of the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality's Regulation 5, under which liquid animal waste systems and waste management plans are currently permitted.

The current law, Ark. Code Ann. 15-20-1114, states that the law "shall not supersede" the existing requirements of the Arkansas Water and Air Pollution Control Act, but that waste management plans will not be subject to the law "or any regulations adopted under" the law. The department's Regulation 5, which covers all hog farms in the state except C&H Hog Farms in Newton County, is adopted under the law.

C&H Hog Farms, a 6,503-head hog farm near the Buffalo National River that had its permit denied last year, has a Regulation 6 permit that has expired, which is what prompted its owners to apply for a Regulation 5 permit, that was subsequently denied.

Environmental groups have opposed the farm's operation within the river's watershed and say it poses a threat to the river's water quality.

The commission may determine that certain activities are not in compliance with the law and shall be subject to regulation under the law, the bill continues.

The bill's passage would negate Regulation 5's moratorium on any new medium or large hog farms in the Buffalo River watershed, critics say.

During a review next year, Department of Environmental Quality Director Becky Keogh is to decide whether to keep the moratorium. The moratorium is not explicitly referred to in the bill, but Stubblefield said the department would retain decision-making authority.

Critics also worry about losing Regulation 5's requirement that facilities consider the Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook. The handbook has recommendations on farm siting, geologic investigations and manure pond liners, among other things.

In denying C&H's permit, state department regulators determined that C&H did not submit enough information to ensure the facility's site as safe, per handbook recommendations.

Senators discussed the department's "mistakes" in the C&H permitting process and questioned the need for keeping permitting authority with the department. Bond argued that the department has improved its operations.

The bill would not have any implications for C&H, Stubblefield said, because if C&H pulled its application, it would have to close. C&H remains open indefinitely while litigation related to its various permit denials remains in circuit court.

Bond said he isn't sure that C&H wouldn't benefit because its owners may be able to apply for a new permit with the commission.

Critics have noted other things that were not debated Tuesday in the Senate.

The bill allows applicants to waive public notification during the permitting process for waste management systems. Existing law allows applicants only to waive the "timeliness requirement," which stipulates that the department shall make decisions within limited time frames.

Stubblefield told senators Tuesday that his bill did not allow applicants to waive public notice requirements and that it allowed them only to waive the department's timeliness requirement.

He said the state administrative procedures law requires public notice.

Stubblefield submitted an amendment to his bill late Monday that would have changed the "notification period requirements" referred to in his bill back to "timeliness requirement" but later withdrew it.

The Beaver Water District, the main water source for Northwest Arkansas, and Central Arkansas Water, the main water source for central Arkansas, oppose the bill. The utilities contend that the bill would loosen permitting requirements and possibly expose drinking water sources to excess algae-causing phosphorus.

The Department of Environmental Quality has maintained that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency could raise concerns about the law as it relates to protections of waters under the Clean Water Act. An Arkansas Farm Bureau representative who used to work for the department disputed that assertion at a Senate committee meeting last week.

Many hog farms also need construction permits if they operate on enough acreage, said Jessie Green, executive director of the White River Waterkeeper and a former department engineer. The department would remain in charge of those, she said, without the ability to decide on the other permits.

Further, Green said, complaints and inspections of facilities are not provided on the commission's website, unlike the department's website. And, unlike at the department, people who complain about a facility to the commission must submit their complaints in writing, have them notarized and mailed with their names on them.

"That's a huge barrier to trying to get the public involved," Green said.

# Flooding in the Midwest unlikely to impact Mississippi River levels in New Orleans

Updated Mar 19, 11:45 AM;

Posted Mar 19, 11:04 AM

16

Gallery: Bonnet Carre Spillway flood protection structure opened

1

106  
shares

By Maria Clark, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

Mississippi River levels in New Orleans are not likely to be affected by the severe flooding that has impacted residents across four midwestern states, as rising water levels of the Missouri River breached or overtopped nearly 200 miles of levees this week.

The flooding is being blamed for at least three deaths, according to the Associated Press.

---

---

Although the Missouri River is one of the major tributaries to the Mississippi River, meteorologists do not expect to see much of an impact on water levels further south.

Danielle Manning, a meteorologist with the Slidell office of the National Weather Service, said that water levels near the Carrollton gauge in New Orleans are expected to start falling toward the end of March and beginning of April.

Although a secondary crest is expected around mid-April, it is not expected to be as high as current water levels, she said.



The river in New Orleans is currently cresting at 16.9 feet as of Tuesday (March 19), and is expected to remain at 16.9 feet over the next five days, according to the National Weather Service's five-day river forecast.

Flood stage at the Carrollton gauge is 17 feet, but the levee system that protects New Orleans can support up to 20 feet of water.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened the Bonnet Carré Spillway last month in order to lower river water levels before they reached flood stage. The structure has only been put to use to control the water levels of the Mississippi River 13 times since it was built following the historic 1927 Mississippi River flood, but this opening marked the third time in the last four years. The spillway is located on the east bank of the river at Montz, in St. Charles Parish, and reroutes water from the river into Lake Pontchartrain, where it will flow into the Mississippi Sound and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico.

---

---

At its maximum flow, the Corps opened 206 bays. On Friday (March 15) the water flow dropped down a little, so the Corps closed 10 bays and have kept 196 bays open since then.

“The forecast has the river holding fairly flat for the next few weeks before starting a long, slow drop,” said Matthew Roe, a spokesperson for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New Orleans District. “Based on the current forecast the river will drop enough before the water in the Midwest causes a second bump, but it will not be as high as the river was during the peak last week.”

Manning said that Baton Rouge and the Red River landings further north might see more elevated water levels, while New Orleans levels fall.

Heavier rainfalls over the Ohio Valley tend to have more of an impact on water levels further south in the Mississippi River, which resulted in higher levels a few weeks ago.

“Whatever happens, unless there is a ridiculous amount of rain in the Ohio Valley over the next couple of weeks, we won’t see the water level coming up to the current levels,” Manning said.

# As FEMA rewrites flood insurance rules, 'the devil's in the details'

Updated Mar 19, 3:30 PM;

Posted Mar 19, 11:35 AM

28

Gallery: Flooding hits multiple U.S. states

6

42  
shares

By Drew Broach, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

New flood insurance rules that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is writing for the National Flood

Insurance Program have garnered praise and alarm from Louisiana interests monitoring the changes. While more accurate mapping of flood risk is welcome, the price of coverage for some property owners might well rise.

---

Much remains to be determined after FEMA announced Monday (March 18) it will tie premiums to the actual flood risk facing individual properties, instead of to whether the property is inside or outside a much broader “100-year” flood plain. The new rules, not yet written, are to take effect in October 2020.

“The devil’s in the details,” Michael Hecht, president and chief executive officer of GNO Inc., said Tuesday. The regional economic development group has taken a lead role in voicing the New Orleans area’s interests as the flood insurance program has been scrutinized in Washington.

“On the one hand, more accurate mapping is a good thing and one we have been advocating for years,” Hecht said. “On the other hand, it’s critical that we understand how the risk is going to be calculated and how affordability is going to be preserved.”



Homes flood in 4 states as Missouri River overtops, breaches levees

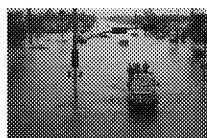
FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program underwrites almost all flood insurance in the United States, about 5 million policyholders. It’s especially important in low-lying coastal states such as Louisiana, but major disasters over the past 14 years – Hurricane Katrina and the Louisiana Flood of 2016, among them – have driven the program into debt of more than \$30 billion.

---

---

Reformers demand changes to eliminate the debt to taxpayers and discourage building in high-risk areas. Coastal interests anguish that rising premiums will cripple property owners.

Congress is in a pickle. Having failed in the past 17 months to enact long-term changes, it's passed 10 temporary extensions of the existing program, the current one expiring May 31.



FEMA changes for flood insurance program put burden on riskiest properties

Now FEMA is moving forward on its own, but President Donald Trump's administration can expect lawmakers to try to influence the rules.

"My first priority is to ensure any proposal changing the National Flood Insurance Program is sustainable and affordable for Louisiana homeowners," Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., said. "It needs to accurately account for local flood protection structures when determining the risk profile for homes."

A spokeswoman for Rep. Steve Scalise, R-Old Jefferson, said: "While Rep. Scalise welcomes reforms to the NFIP that bring more transparency to how FEMA sets flood insurance rates and improves the mapping process, he would be strongly opposed to efforts by FEMA that would result in massive rate

shocks that would decimate communities in south Louisiana and harm families and small businesses."

---



On flood insurance, these 12 U.S. senators voted against keeping the program

Hecht said two things seem clear even this early in the rule-making process:

- FEMA will calculate risk at the granular level of individual property, instead of whether the land is within a bigger area considered to have a 1 percent chance in any given year to flood. A briefing document the agency used in October offered the example of two houses in a 100-year flood plain: The first house, at the edge of that zone, would face a lower risk and see premiums fall 57 percent, while the second faces a higher risk and premiums more than doubling, Bloomberg News reported.

- The agency will use not only its own mapping but some calculations from the private sector. Those recognize not just sea level rise and surge from tropical storms but also rainfall.



## Footnote sparks wrangling on endangerment finding

Niina Heikkinen, E&E News reporter  
Published: Wednesday, March 20, 2019



EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler is facing pressure to change the agency's endangerment finding on greenhouse gases. EPA

A footnote is renewing debate on how EPA should consider its 2009 determination that greenhouse gases harm human health and welfare as it rewrites climate rules.

Some industry critics of Obama-era rules are arguing that the agency should draft a separate endangerment finding specific to carbon emissions from power plants. Others are asking the agency to maintain its current interpretation.

The endangerment finding forms the legal foundation of EPA's climate rules. The Trump administration has so far resisted calls from far-right groups to throw out the Obama-era conclusion.

But discussion about the finding surfaced in comments on EPA's proposed changes to New Source Performance Standards for new and modified power plants. Under the proposed standards, EPA would no longer consider partial carbon capture and storage the "best system of emissions reductions" for coal-fired power plants, and new and modified plants would have greater leeway to release higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

EPA prompted the discussion in a footnote of the rule proposal, though officials made assurances at the time of the rule's release that the agency is not seeking to review the endangerment finding itself ([Greenwire](#), Dec. 7, 2018).

EPA asked for comment on whether it should draft a new endangerment finding "each time the agency regulates an additional pollutant by an already-listed source category." The agency also asked whether it should draft a new finding for greenhouse gases.

Finally, EPA asked whether it could decline to regulate new power plants at all, given ongoing trends in emissions reductions from the power sector and with only a few new coal-fired power plants expected to be built in the coming years.

The public comment period on the proposal closed this week.

Some commenters from the fossil fuel industry joined Murray Energy Corp. in arguing EPA had failed to meet a legal obligation to draft a separate endangerment finding for new power plants. They say the agency cannot rely on the 2009 finding, which focused on emissions from automobiles.

Under the Obama administration, EPA determined in 2012 that it could still regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants without a separate endangerment finding because they were already a listed source category under the Clean Air Act ([Climatewire](#), Dec. 14, 2018).

But at EPA's public hearing on the new source rule last month, Murray Energy argued the agency should find that it did not have the legal authority to regulate greenhouse gases from power plants and should withdraw the rule entirely (*E&E News PM*, Feb. 14).

The North American Coal Corp. (NACoal), which owns and operates surface coal mines, also noted that EPA's 2009 endangerment finding referred to "six well-mixed greenhouse gases" that were treated as a single pollutant.

"EPA has never found that CO<sub>2</sub> alone endangers public health or welfare in a significant way, much less that CO<sub>2</sub> from [electric generating units] (as opposed to motor vehicles) has that effect," the comments read. "Whether EPA believes it would be able to develop a record that would support such a finding is irrelevant."

NACoal said it supported EPA's decision to consider the "best system of emissions reductions" a combination of efficiency improvements and best operating practices. Like many opponents of the Obama-era rule, the coal mining company also argued that partial carbon capture and storage had not been found to be either viable or cost-effective.

Others, like Unions for Jobs & Environmental Progress, opposed EPA making changes to its current interpretation of the endangerment finding's application to power plants, even as the group lauded EPA's less-stringent emissions standards.

UJEP described itself as an ad hoc association of labor unions representing workers in electric power, transportation, coal mining, construction and other energy-related jobs.

"We are concerned, however, that EPA is also requesting comment on legal and technical issues that could have the effect of reversing the Agency's current position on the endangerment finding made for the EGU source category," UJEP wrote.

The association cautioned against the potential consequences if EPA decided there was "no rational basis" for regulating new power plants. That could preclude regulation of existing power plants, "thereby invalidating the Affordable Clean Energy Rule once it is adopted as a replacement rule for the Clean Power Plan."

Meanwhile, Howard Feldman, the American Petroleum Institute's senior director for regulatory and scientific affairs, did not raise the endangerment finding in his comments, although API and American Fuel & Petroleum Manufacturers commented extensively on the issue during the formation of the Obama-era rule.

Opponents of the Trump administration's proposed changes to the New Source Performance Standards lambasted EPA for weakening the rule and even fielding comments on the endangerment finding.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) described EPA as being captured by industry interests. He pointed specifically to the influence that Murray Energy Corp. has had on EPA, noting the agency's administrator, Andrew Wheeler, used to lobby for the company.

"Not only did Murray Energy sue to block the 2015 rule, it has also filed comments challenging EPA's endangerment finding with respect to GHG emissions from new coal-fired EGUs," the senator wrote. "The proposed rule seeks input on this specific question, suggesting EPA is entertaining Murray Energy's suggestion to revisit the endangerment finding for this source category."

Whitehouse described the rule-making change as "arbitrary and capricious."

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community in Michigan also voiced its support for EPA's current interpretation of the endangerment finding, saying there was a rational basis to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from all sources.

"The EPA should have an official rulemaking process on this matter rather than burying the request as a footnote," the comment read.

The Clean Air Task Force, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Conservation Law Foundation, Clean Wisconsin and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy all opposed the Trump administration's proposed rule.

The environmental groups maintained that the Obama-era rule's establishment of partial carbon capture and storage was reasonable. They noted that the Clean Air Act was meant to be technology forcing, "requiring bold action in the face of increasing pollution harms."

"This Proposal is hopelessly backward and inconsistent with the Act and must be withdrawn," the environmental groups said.

**PowerPost** Analysis

# The Energy 202: 1 in 3 Americans blame climate change for weird winter temperatures

By Dino Grandoni

## THE LIGHTBULB

This winter, temperatures plunged so low in the Midwest — at times below minus-50 degrees — that mail service stalled, airline gas lines froze and Chicago set parts of its commuter rail on fire to stop the bone-deep chill from damaging the tracks.

Few would blame those gripped by the cold for not thinking very much about global warming.

Yet some of them were.

### **New polling shows that one in three Americans blamed unusual winter temperatures on Earth's changing climate.**

The survey, published by Gallup on Tuesday, indicates U.S. residents are becoming more likely to attribute unusual weather in their own backyards — including even that teeth-chattering cold this winter — to broader global changes in the planet's climate because of human activity.

### **It also comes at a time when politicians in Washington seem to be talking more about federal action to stop climate change than they have in a decade, with many Democratic presidential contenders rallying around creating a Green New Deal.**

“We talk a lot about people's belief in global warming,” said Lydia Saad, a senior editor at Gallup. “But this brings it down to a bit more of a personal experience.”

“This is kind of where the rubber meets the road,” she added.

Forty-three percent of Americans said temperatures were colder than usual this winter, according to Gallup. Of those respondents, 44 percent attributed the colder weather to climate change. Only 37 percent thought the same in 2015, and 29 percent did so in 2014.

Similarly, 70 percent of those Americans who reported higher-than-usual temperatures this year blamed those usually mild conditions on climate change. That's up significantly from 2012, when only 38 percent of such

respondents saw global warming as responsible for the balmy conditions.

**Of course, people's prior beliefs about climate change seem to color their perceptions of how weird was the winter weather.**

"Those who worry a great deal or fair amount about global warming are more likely to report experiencing warmer than usual winter weather than those worried only a little or not at all," Saad said. "The finding is similar for the perception that winter is colder than usual."

And human beings in general are more much less reliable measurers of temperature than a regular-old mercury thermometer.

According to Gallup, Americans were more likely to say they went through a colder-than-average winter rather than a warmer-than-average one. But the reality is that the United States had above-average temperatures between December 2018 and February 2019, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

That discrepancy may be due to the timing of survey. It was conducted during the first 10 days of March, immediately after a February that clocked in 1.8 degrees below average. The Midwest was in the middle of that "polar vortex" freeze at the start of the month.

"February seems to be what people have in mind when they answer in March," Saad said. She added that parts of December were so warm near her home in Connecticut that she sent her kids to school in shorts.

Gallup's results are part of its annual report on Americans' attitudes about climate change, which will be released in full next week.

**Yet President Trump is pointing to the low thermometer reading as a sign that man-made climate change is not happening.** In January, for example, he tweeted: "In the beautiful Midwest, wind chill temperatures are reaching minus 60 degrees, the coldest ever recorded. In coming days, expected to get even colder. People can't last outside even for minutes. What the hell is going on with Global Warming? Please come back fast, we need you!"

Yet, as counterintuitive as it may sound, there is heated debate among climate scientists over whether those extreme cold snaps — such as the one that rolled through the United States in January — are due to rising temperatures in the Arctic.

The idea is that the lack of sea ice up north destabilizes the jet stream that encircles the Arctic, causing the river of air to dip farther to the south and deliver a punch of cold polar wind to low latitudes. As more Americans hear about that theory, still not fully accepted by all climate scientists, more may be associating the cold snaps with climate change.

Other recent polling show Americans increasingly noticing what they think are the effects of climate change around them following recent torrential hurricanes and massive wildfires — weather events scientists know with more certainty are made worse by warming temperatures.

According to a University of Chicago survey, for example, of the respondents that said they found the climate science more convincing than they did five years ago, three-quarters of them acknowledged that recent hurricanes, floods, droughts and unusual heat influenced their views.

That effect can even be felt in GOP-leaning North Carolina. After two major hurricanes in the past three years brought devastating floods to the state, an Elon University poll last year found that 37 percent of Republicans there believe global warming is “very likely” to hurt North Carolina’s coastal communities over the next half-century — nearly triple the number of Republicans who said the same in 2017.

“I always thought climate change was a bunch of nonsense,” one Trump-supporting North Carolinian told The Post’s Tracy Jan last year. “But now I really do think it is happening.”

You are reading **The Energy 202**, our must-read tipsheet on energy and the environment.

Not a regular subscriber?

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

## POWER PLAYS

— **Trump’s EPA chief defines “the biggest environmental threat we have”:** And it’s not climate change. Recently confirmed Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler told CBS News that “drinking water today worldwide is probably the biggest environmental threat we have” and is “a crisis that I think we can solve.” He told the network the climate change is “an important change we have to be addressing and we are addressing,” but said “most of the threats from climate change are 50-75 years out.” “What we need to do is make sure that the people who are dying today from the lack of having drinking water in third world countries — that problem is addressed,” he added.

— **What Trump’s budget does to science:** More details have been made public about how Trump’s budget request could impact the National Science Foundation, the agency that provides a quarter of all federal funding for basic research, The Post’s Ben Guarino reports. The 12 percent reduction would mean 1,000 fewer grants in 2020, and 400 fewer graduate students than its fellowship program funded last year. The budget proposal would cut research funding in 2020 for the biological sciences, computer sciences, engineering and social sciences by a tenth compared with 2019 levels. Geosciences, mathematical and physical sciences funding would be cut by 15 percent, and polar programs by almost 20 percent. But there are some proposed increases,

such as for artificial intelligence research as well as for funding for advanced manufacturing, semiconductors and microelectronics.

**Some GOP lawmakers have pushed back on proposed energy and environmental cuts:** “[White House officials] make some proposals in there that they know we’re not going to go along with,” said Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho), the ranking Republican of the House Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water development, according to Bloomberg Environment. “Elections have consequences, and the bills we write are going to be more in the Democratic mold,” he added.

— **FERC nominee derailed:** Energy Secretary Rick Perry and major coal companies worked to convince the president not to nominate a prominent lawyer for a spot on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission because he had been publicly critical of the administration’s proposal to help struggling coal power plants. David Hill, who served as general counsel for the Energy Department in the George W. Bush administration was a likely candidate for the post, Politico reported, but he said his nomination process has ended. “He had been expected to fill the vacancy created by former FERC Chairman Kevin McIntyre's death in January,” according to Politico. “But the parallel efforts by Perry and the coal industry proved to be more persuasive with Trump than his chief economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, who was lobbying for Hill.”

— **Oregon lawmakers pass fracking ban:** The state’s House of Representatives voted 42 to 12 to pass a 10-year ban on the process in the state, a measure that will now head to the state Senate for consideration. While there’s no existing fracking operations in the state, “developers say there's potential for coalbed methane extraction in the Willamette Valley, which this bill would also block,” the Associated Press reports.

#### THERMOMETER

— **Much of the Midwest has been ravaged by floodwaters:** The massive late-winter storm that battered much of the Midwest has left widespread destruction in the region and has killed at least four people. Vice President Pence, who visited Nebraska to survey the storm-ravaged region, vowed presidential disaster declarations would be expedited to help impacted states.

**Still, some areas are preparing for more impending destruction.** “While floodwaters remain steady in some areas and recede in others, some regions are bracing for ‘major to historic and catastrophic’ flooding to come as rivers vault toward their crests this week, fed by rapid snowmelt throughout the Missouri and Mississippi River basins, the National Weather Service said,” The Post’s Alex Horton reports.

**The flooding is hitting Nebraska’s farms particularly hard:** Early estimates show ranching losses in Nebraska will hit \$500 million and row-crop losses at another \$400 million. “For livestock, the loss is a combination of animal deaths and loss of productivity (when it’s cold, cattle and calves don’t grow as fast) as well as loss of quality feed sources,” The Post’s Laura Reiley reports. “For row crops, [Nebraska Farm Bureau President Steve Nelson] explained, farmers are very close to planting season, and fear they won’t have enough time to clean up the land.” “I’m 39 years old; I don’t have children. The cows are my children, and my farm is

completely destroyed. Maybe it's a sign from God to go and do something else," fifth-generation Nebraska rancher Anthony Ruzicka told The Post.

— **Notorious fish that caught fire now safe to eat:** The Environmental Protection Agency gave the green light to ease consumption restrictions on a fish from the Cuyahoga River in Ohio, infamous for catching fire in Cleveland in 1969 because of water pollution. "This is an example of the progress that can be achieved when you collaborate and dedicate resources to improving the quality of water in our state," Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said in a statement. "The Cuyahoga River was already one of the most polluted rivers in the country at the time of the fire on June 22, 1969 . . . The fire was neither the first nor the worst the river had experienced," the Associated Press reports. "But the 1969 fire on the river, where industrial waste and sewage were regularly dumped, drew national media attention that made it an instant poster child for water pollution at a time when the country was becoming more environmentally aware."

— **More river news, Potomac edition:** The Potomac Riverkeeper Network announced it will start monitoring water quality at six different points along the river to provide public data that and help people decide whether it's safe enough to swim, The Post's Marissa J. Lang reports. The information will be uploaded to a website and app, Swim Guide, that tracks weather and water quality at 7,000 beaches worldwide. "In the District, the Department of Health bars swimming in the river," Lang writes. "It's not outlawed in Virginia or Maryland. But, as Potomac riverkeeper Dean Naujoks said, no one knows what the river quality is day-to-day or even week-to-week."

#### OIL CHECK

— **The petrochemical plant blaze in Texas is out:** A fire that broke out on Sunday at a petrochemical storage site near Houston has been extinguished, CBS Newsreports. Intercontinental Terminals Company has been monitoring air quality at its facility and said readings are "well below hazardous levels." The head of the county's health department said Tuesday there "continues to be a low risk to our community."

#### DAYBOOK

### Today

The Atlantic Council holds an event on geopolitics, energy security and the U.S.-Japan alliance.

### Coming Up

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission holds a meeting on Thursday.

#### EXTRA MILEAGE

— **The flooding from above:** The Post graphics team on the satellite images showing the catastrophic flooding in the Midwest.

# Cyanide plant would be safer under Cornerstone proposal, hazards inspector says

Today 7:30 PM

8

Gallery: Cornerstone Chemical Co., March 19, 2019

9

**253**  
shares

By Drew Broach, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune



Jefferson Parish's top hazardous materials officer predicted Tuesday (March 19) that the Cornerstone Chemical Co. complex at Waggaman would "absolutely" be safer under the company's plans to upgrade equipment and technology while building a new \$100 million cyanide plant there. The assessment has prompted one Parish Councilmember to seek a compromise that might let the cyanide plant go forward despite fierce opposition from residents.

---

---

The council is scheduled to vote Wednesday on revoking its January 2018 permission for Cornerstone to construct more storage tanks, replace an existing tank and build a new hydrogen cyanide plant at the 800-acre Fortier manufacturing complex. But Councilman Dominick Impastato III said he wants to defer voting "to do some more research into the science of what they are doing, the background and what they want to do, and to rectify the citizens' concerns without shutting down the project."

Impastato said he decided to chart a new path after talking Monday with Steven Mutz, the hazardous materials risk coordinator for Parish President Mike Yenni's administration. Mutz told him that Cornerstone's plan to spend another \$20 million upgrading its existing assets will make the overall plant "safer than it has been for the past 50 years," Impastato said.

Mutz confirmed that Tuesday when asked about Impastato's statement. "Absolutely," he said.

Impastato's position is just what Cornerstone wants. Three weeks ago, the company sought to work with the council and public "on a path forward over the next 60 to 90 days. During that time, we are willing to consider adjusting portions of the design and engineering regarding our facility expansion."

---



West Bank cyanide plant losing Jefferson Parish's approval

But in a sign of unresolved political differences, Councilman Mark Spears Jr., whose district includes the site, said he plans to press forward on revoking the permit. Councilman Chris Roberts said he will vote for Spears' motion, and Councilman Paul Johnston, whose constituents in Harahan and River Ridge have been among the most active in opposing the cyanide plant, said he will second it.

"We've got to listen to what our constituents are telling us," Johnston said.

The inter-council split comes during an election-year about-face that not only jeopardizes Cornerstone's expansion plans but also could expose Jefferson Parish to a lawsuit.

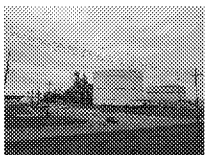
Cornerstone says it already has spent \$14 million on its project since securing council approval 14 months ago, and that it has a "vested interest" in the permit. Too, some economic development boosters caution that the council would be sending a ominous message to business if it reverses course on its 2018 approval.

The split also illustrates a potential fracture in the council's long custom on specific land-use issues of acquiescing to the wishes of the member whose district includes the site. In this case, Cornerstone is in Spears' 3rd District, but Impastato,

who was elected from the 4th District, signaled he's ready to buck convention.

---

Councilwoman Jennifer Van Vrancken was "not prepared to say" on Tuesday how she will vote on the matter. Council members Ricky Templet and Cynthia Lee-Sheng did not immediately return calls for comment.



Cyanide plant for West Bank alarms residents of east bank

Cornerstone and its predecessors have been producing cyanide and other industrial chemicals at Fortier since 1953, with little public attention. The company says it handles chemicals safely and within the parameters of its government permits.

"Cornerstone has made every effort to work with the council and the community to address concerns raised in recent

weeks," chief operating officer Tom Yura said Tuesday. "We met with council members and listened to concerned citizens. We followed the rules and procedures set forth by the parish and the council to gain their earlier permit approval in 2018. Then and now, all elements of our application satisfy the procedural and substantive requirements of the parish's special use permit application process."

Cyanide is a byproduct of Cornerstone making acrylonitrile, which is used to make synthetic fibers and plastics. The company delivers cyanide to another Fortier tenant, Evonik Industries, which uses it to make acrylic monomers for production of plastics, paints and coatings and for the oil and gas industry.

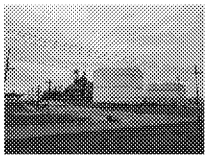
---

---

Cornerstone says it employs about 500 people at a cost of \$50 million annually in pay, benefits and taxes. It says it pays \$5 million a year in state and local taxes and fees, and buys about \$350 million a year from Louisiana vendors. The new

cyanide plant would add 21 employees at an average annual salary of \$80,000, the company says.

In 2017, Cornerstone began moving to upgrade its Fortier assets and build a new cyanide plant. With no public opposition and no objection from the Yenni administration, the Parish Council approved the plans in January 2018.



West Bank cyanide plant proposal draws scores of worried residents: report

Opposition arose later amid a public outcry in Harahan and River Ridge over mysterious odors that, in part, have been blamed on the parish landfill at Waggaman. In researching that stench, residents learned that Cornerstone wanted to expand and had Parish Council approval. They have been burying the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality with objections to the agency potentially granting Cornerstone a new air emissions permit, and lobbying the Parish Council to change its mind.

# State water agency to double aquifer pumping fees; cost will be less than \$2 a month per family

BY STEVE HARDY | SHARDY@THEADVOCATE.COM MAR 19, 2019 - 2:20 PM

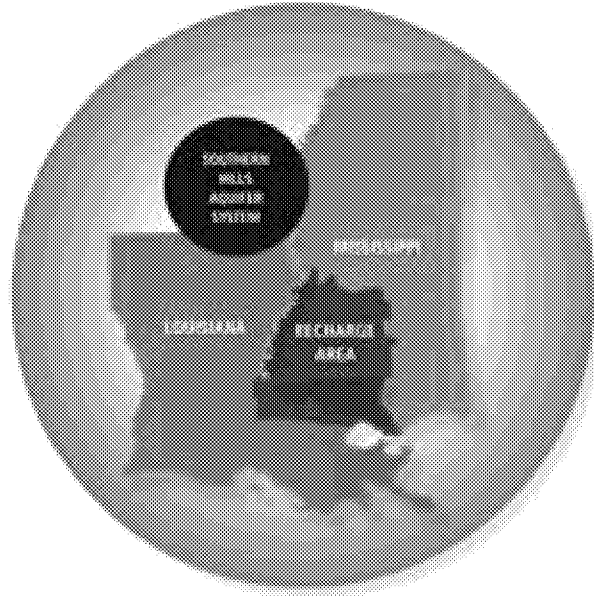


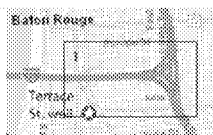
Image of the Southern Hills Aquifer system provided by the Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission. Southern Hills provides water for drinking and commercial use throughout the Baton Rouge metro area.

Image provided

Steve Hardy

The local groundwater board intends to double the fees for water pumped for residential and industrial use in an effort to secure more funding to protect the aquifer beneath Baton Rouge.

The Capital Area Groundwater Commission claims \$10 for every million gallons pumped, but its board voted Tuesday to raise the amount to \$20.



## State to drill new wells to combat saltwater leaching toward Baton Rouge drinking supply.

The commission collected about \$407,000 from pumping fees in the six months between July and January, according to a report provided Tuesday. Board members





represents Entergy, said Georgia-Pacific will continue to tap the aquifer and that he's heard of no suggestions its board seat be removed.

Commissioner Matt Reonas, of the state Office of Conservation, asked whether last year's decision to bring Ascension Parish into the district could help offset the cost of losing income from Georgia-Pacific. The parish lies south of the aquifer, but residents and businesses use water pumped in by the Water Co. Wells in Ascension are probably too shallow and too little-used to make a major contribution though the issue is still under review, said executive director Anthony Duplechin and commissioner Mark Walton.

For the sake of fairness, the groundwater commission needs to figure that out and start collecting whatever it's due, said commissioner William Daniel, who works for Ascension Parish but represents East Baton Rouge Parish. Daniel was among the commissioners who were concerned about the board's ability to protect the supply of water used for drinking and industry.



**First wave of Georgia-Pacific layoffs begin Tuesday, affecting 270 workers**

The region should have a better idea of the scope of the problem by the end of the year, when the Water Institute plans to issue a report looking at models of the aquifer and solutions pioneered in other aquifers, said institute Vice President Alyssa Dausman. She anticipates holding public workshops in August and September to solicit input. Past discussions have included calls to limit industrial pumping, to prohibit out-of-district sale of water and to institute tiered fees.

Reonas wondered whether, for example, rate payers in Pointe Coupee or the Felicianas parishes should be charged less because they're farther from the fault line where the salt is creeping in.

# After Outage, Gold King Mine Wastewater Plant Back In Operation

March 18, 2019 at 8:17 am



(AP) – A plant that treats wastewater draining from the Gold King Mine in southwestern Colorado has resumed operating after being shut down by a winter storm that struck the area this past week. The New Mexico Environment Department announced Saturday afternoon that it received word from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the facility was back up and running.

ADVERTISING

FOLLOW US

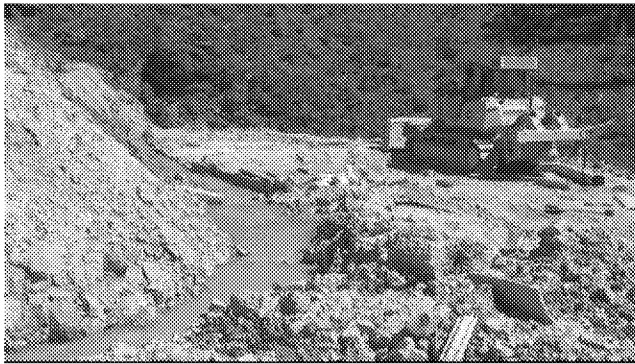
OUR NEWSLETTER



Sign up and get our latest headlines delivered right to your inbox!

Email address

Subscribe Now!

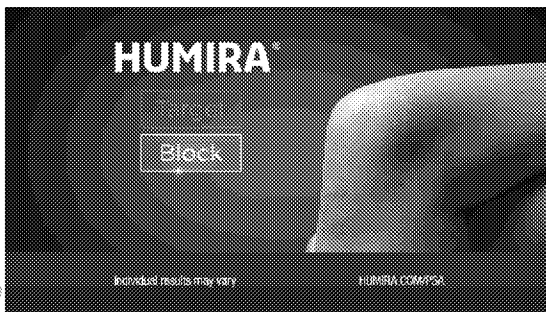


Gold King Mine (credit: CBS)

The EPA says fluctuating electricity stopped the plant Thursday night.

The plant was installed after the EPA inadvertently triggered a wastewater spill from the Gold King in 2015, contaminating rivers in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.

Comments



AD 00:13 / 01:00

SPONSORED CONTENT

## Kyle MacLachlan Discusses His New, Poignant Film, 'Giant Little Ones'

Kyle MacLachlan talks about his most recent film, 'Giant Little Ones.'

Promoted by Connatix

## 100 Vehicles Involved In Crash On I-25 In Northern Colorado

Emergency crews in northern Larimer County responded to a 100-car crash on Interstate 25 during Wednesday's blizzard.

## Mom's Twins Born Different. 18 Years After, This Is What They Look Like

IcePop | Sponsored

## Elvis' only Grandson is 25 now & He is an absolute Copy of his legendary Grandpa

## MOST VIEWED

- 1 Staggering Losses Being Recorded For Farmers, Ranchers After Blizzard ☞
- 2 Denver Ranks Fifth Among 'Most-Fled' Metro Areas ☞
- 3 Copper Mountain Shatters March Snowfall Record ☞
- 4 Good Samaritan Rescues Family's Car Buried 5 Days After Bomb Cyclone ☞
- 5 CDOT Worker Eric Hill Killed At Job Site Near Gypsum ☞
- 6 Jury Convicts Soldier In Murder Of Elbert County Rancher ☞
- 7 \$825,000 Settlement After Police Beat, Tase, Pepper Spray Diabetic Man ☞
- 8 Colorado Blizzard Recap: Snow Totals, Wind Gusts And Pressure Readings ☞
- 9 Dog Breathing Easy After Breakthrough Surgery Previously Used For Humans ☞
- 10 Moose Breaks Into Breckenridge Home, Takes Nap ☞

# Deer Park plant fire may have been sparked by overheated storage tank, worker says

By Nicole Hensley Updated 10:28 pm CDT, Tuesday, March 19, 2019



---

## IMAGE 1 OF 75

Firefighters continue to battle a petrochemical fire at Intercontinental Terminals Company, after it grew in size due to a lack in water pressure last night Tuesday, March 19, 2019, in Deer Park, Texas.

---

A worker who said he was at the Intercontinental Terminals Co. when the fire first erupted Sunday morning first noticed smoke rising from a chemical storage tank.

He left the terminal within a half-hour and by then, "It was roaring up."

The man, who asked not to be identified for fear of repercussions, said speculation among his colleagues is that parts of the tank may have overheated. The tanks overheat from time to time, he said, but normally have a safety mechanism that can shut them off.

For whatever reason, that safety mechanism may not have been enough to prevent the fire, he said.

## Recommended Video

"Everyone thinks a tank overheated," he said.

Video of the initial incident on Sunday showed flames on the ground between several tanks.

The cause remains under investigation.

k containing naphtha on the industrial grounds as State Historic Site and Buffalo Bayou.

The blaze churned through the terminal, engulfing as many as eight units at one point and sending a massive plume of black smoke drifting across the Houston area and stretching northwest of the city.

The fire surged again late Monday as a loss of water pressure hampered firefighting efforts. By late Tuesday, the plume lost much of its height and volume even as the fire was expected to continue through Wednesday.

The company's storage facility along the Houston Ship Channel contains 242 tanks capable of holding petrochemical liquids and gases, including oil products. It has been located in the channel area for the past 47 years alongside several energy-producing corporations synonymous with Houston.

The worker said he and his colleagues expected the fire to have been put out in the hours after it started but that never happened.

Now, he explained, "It's like putting out a 55-gallon drum with a squirt gun," he said.

The worker asked that his name and company not be identified. He provided photos of the facility.